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Memorandum

To: LaDonna Turner, Site Assessment Manager
Technical and Enforcement Branch
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6

From: Dana Bahar, Manager, Superfund Oversight Section
Ground Water Quality Bureau, New Mexico Environment
Department.

Date: September 10, 2009

Subject: Pre-CERCLIS Screening Assessment of Hope Mine, McKinley
County, New Mexico: Further action under CERCLA
recommended

Site name	Hope Mine				
City	not applicable	State	New Mexico	Zip code	not applicable
County	McKinley				
Latitude	35° 20' 10.78"	Longitude	107° 49' 59.77"		

Site physical description: The Hope Mine currently is an area of disturbance with scattered limestone waste material, several concrete slabs, and a possible open shaft covered by a steel plate.

Site identification: Potential alluvial ground water contamination within the Grants Mineral Belt was identified because background standards established for the contaminants of concern for ongoing remedial action associated with the Homestake Mining Company NPL site (CERCLIS NMD0007860935) are generally higher than Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs). NMED conducted sampling of private residential wells in subdivisions located in the vicinity of the HMC site, and found that the majority had one or more contaminant concentrations exceeding MCLs.

Site summary: Observations made during NMED's Site reconnaissance are shown on the accompanying figure. A possible location of a mineshaft is indicated by a heavy steel plate. The highest radioactivity reading was measured at a waste rock pile (823 counts per second [cps]; background=32 cps). Contamination of vicinity soils and surface drainages by precipitative erosion and wind dispersion comprise the primary contaminant

pathways that may be associated with this site. Additionally, site runoff of contaminated wastes may impact ground water quality either through seepage through alluvium or by direct entry to the subsurface via the open shaft.

Targets: Residences are located near the junction of State Hwy. 605 and 509, approximately 1.0 air-miles northeast of the Site. Other potential targets may include cattle and wildlife.

Closest well sampled to date: livestock well SMC-22 (0.8 air-miles; 48.2 µg/l total uranium in 2009 sampling).

Site ownership and Potentially Responsible Parties: Surface rights reportedly are held by Marquez; mineral rights are held by Newmont Mining Company. Ranchers Development and Exploration Company reportedly last operated the mine in 1981.

File review: NMED staff reviewed the following files:

- Database compiled by Mining and Minerals Division of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (07/20/2007).
- Anderson, Orin J., 1980. "Abandoned or inactive uranium mines in New Mexico".
- McLemore, Virginia T. and William L. Chenoweth, 1991. "Uranium mines and deposits in the Grants district, Cibola and McKinley Counties, New Mexico." New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources Open-file report 353.
- Rappaport, Linda, "Uranium deposits of the Poison Canyon ore trend, Grants District," in "Geology and technology of the Grants Uranium Region, 1963. State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources.
- U.S. Geological Survey, 1997. "Gallup quadrangle NURE HSSR study." OFR-97-492.

Site reconnaissance: NMED staff conducted a Site reconnaissance on July 2, 2009.

Recommendation: A release of CERCLA hazardous substances has been documented at the site. NMED recommends further investigation under CERCLA to assess the risk posed by the site using the Hazard Ranking System.

NMED recommends that the investigation include the following:

1. Sample sediments along drainages to characterize extent of Site-derived waste dispersion.
2. Investigate and characterize ground water impacts.

In addition NMED recommends the following actions be performed to address immediate threats to public health and the environment:

1. Remove waste with elevated radioactivity.
2. Plug open shaft, if present.

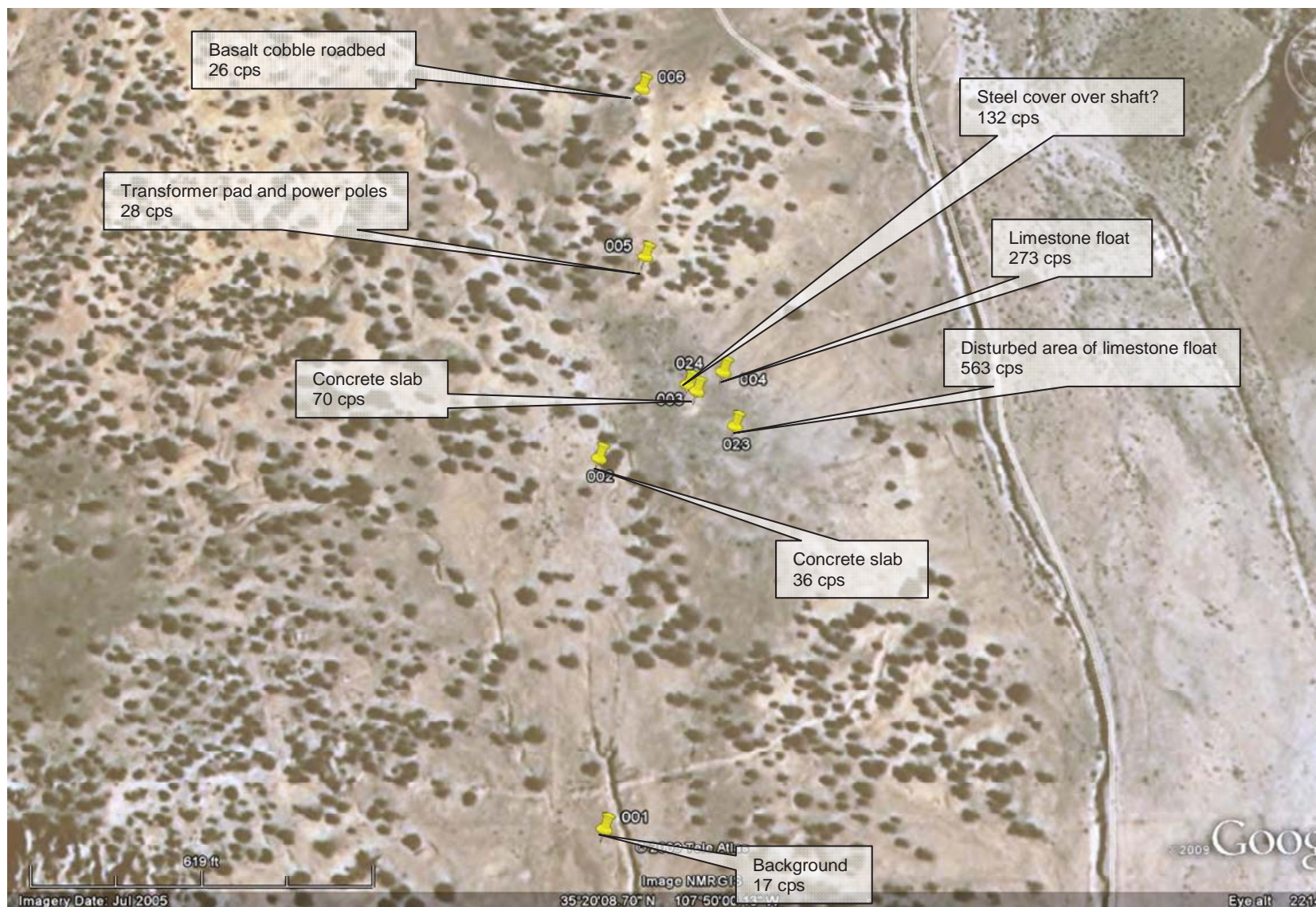


Figure 1: Hope Mine—measurements taken on July 2, 2009